

REMARKS

Claims 1-38 are all the claims currently pending. No claims are amended, added, or canceled, and no new subject matter is added. In view of the following comments, reconsideration and allowance of all the claims is anticipated.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for considering the references in the Information Disclosure Statements filed on January 15, 2002, and August 5, 2004, as evidenced by the signed and initialed copies of the PTO-1449 forms enclosed with the Office Action.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C § 103

Claims 1, 6-11, 16-21, and 26-38 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over European Patent Application Publication EP 1087306 A2 to Hubert (hereinafter "Hubert"). Claims 2, 3, 12, and 13 stand rejected under § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hubert in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,560,588 to Minter (hereinafter "Minter"). Claims 4, 5, 14, 15, 24, and 25 stand rejected under § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hubert in view of Minter and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,349,295 to Tedesco *et al.* (hereinafter "Tedesco").

The Applicant traverses all of the above rejections on the grounds that Hubert does not qualify as prior art. Hubert has a European filing date of August 29, 2000. The instant application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/401,581, filed September 22, 1999, and therefore has an effective filing date that predates Hubert. In fact, the priority date of this application pre-dates the September 24, 1999 U.S. priority date of Hubert. As a result, the rejections of claims 1, 6-11, 16-21, and 26-38 are improper, and must be withdrawn.

Regarding claims 2, 3, 12, and 13, Minter does not teach the applied features of Hubert. Therefore, the rejections of claims 2, 3, 12, and 13 are improper and must be withdrawn.

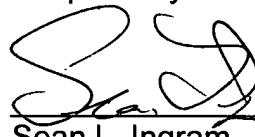
Patent Application
Attorney Docket No. 042846-0313087
Reply

With respect to claims 4, 5, 14, 15, 24, and 25, Minter and Tedesco, both alone and in combination, fail to teach or suggest the applied features of Huber. Consequently, the rejections of claims 4, 5, 14, 15, 24, and 25 are improper and must be withdrawn.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

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Respectfully submitted,



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